

# WORKERS VOICE

COMMUNIST  
WORKERS  
ORGANISATION

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## ORDER REIGNS IN THE GULF...



## IMPERIALIST WAR GOES ON

Iran's unconditional acceptance of UN Security Council 598, almost a year to the day after it was passed, is a direct result of the decision of both imperialist blocs to end the war. It is a massive defeat for Khomeini's Islamic Republic. It shows that no country can win any conflict without the support of one of the major imperialist powers.

In fact the ending of the war, like the settlements that are being cooked up in Afghanistan, Cambodia and Angola can only be understood in the context of present rapprochement between the USA and the USSR. The decrease in the number of local wars and inter-imperialist rivalries in general are the result of the different economic problems which both superpowers face. Russian growth rates are plunging (see article on the centre pages) whilst it has to spend 25% or more of its GNP on the military. The USA can no longer maintain an increasing budget deficit.

Russia and the USA have starved Iran of military equipment to the point where the country which only eighteen months ago appeared to be on the brink of winning the war, today finds its troops running

away. The recent retreats at Fao, east of Basrah, Majnoon and in Kurdistan, coupled with active US intervention on the side of Iraq meant only one thing. The mullahs had the choice of seeing the war effort and the regime collapse, or they could abandon the war to save the regime. They chose the latter.

As we have shown in our writing on the war (see Revolutionary Perspectives nos 20 & 21, Worker's Voice now 31, 32 etc), it has been totally reactionary from the start. It was started by Iraq for capitalist aims - the annexation of the Shatt al Arab waterway and the oilfields of Kuzistan - and was continued for capitalist motives by both Iran and Iraq. At no time did the working class have the slightest interest in fighting this war.

World imperialism, however, tolerated the war. The US initially encouraged Iraq to invade in the hope of overthrowing the Islamic regime and bringing their former client to heel. When this failed both the US and Russia (and their client states, e.g. China, Britain, France, W. Germany, The Netherlands - the last two supplying most of the chemicals for the

Iraqi poison gases) turned to selling weapons to both sides, and waiting for more favourable regimes to emerge. Though the US made one abortive attempt to reestablish itself in Iran, through the notorious North/McFarlane arms sales to Tehran, the policy of containing and profiting from the war continued until 1987. When a real possibility of Iraqi defeat and the subsequent threat to US interests in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states emerged in 1987 the US entered the war directly on the pretence of protecting shipping. In fact, the tanker war had started 3 years earlier in 1984, and the majority of shipping was destroyed by Iraq. The US navy has even failed to make the Gulf safe for shipping. The number of ships attacked in 1987 was double that attacked in 1986! The Russians too abandoned in 1986! The Russians too abandoned the policy of arming both sides, partly because a change in regime seemed unlikely while the war continued, and partly because of Iranian support for the Afghan mujahideen. The Russians continued arming Iraq, in particular supplying them with longer range rockets enabling them to strike Tehran and start the so-called "war of the cities".

When both imperialist powers decided it was in their interests to end the war, they ordered the members of their blocs and their clients to stop the flow of arms to Iran. This precipitated the recent string of Iranian defeats. The Iranian capitulation shows that the war was only possible while imperialism created the conditions for it to continue.

"...the Arab states and their governments are only puppets controlled by the super-powers and their scope for autonomous action is no longer than the string they are held by." Statement of the International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party on the Iran/Iraq war, Worker's Voice 32.

The ending of the war does not mean the struggle between world imperialism in the Gulf has ended. It means that at present they have other fish to fry. It is a real victory for US imperialism. Given the relative weakness of the Russian economy in comparison with that of its rival, Gorbachev can only hope to win friends and influence people (by, for example, inviting the Israelis to Moscow for the first time in 21 years). The Western bloc will still be able to make material gains by selling the materials for rearmament to both sides. The war losses sustained by Iran and Iraq over the past eight years have been colossal. These losses can only reinforce imperialist domination over both as they become hopelessly entwined in debt. In the long term the US hopes to reincorporate Iran into its bloc and complete the Southern encirclement of Russia.

### RESISTANCE TO THE WAR

Resistance to the war has grown in both countries despite internal repression which has been on a scale second only to that of Pol Pot in Cambodia. Literally hundreds of thousands have been executed for political opposition or resistance to the war. Recently, however, the Mullahs' pleas for volunteers has failed to produce the cannon fodder they require and in Iraq tens of thousands of men are in hiding from the army press gangs. There have also been reports of anti-war demonstrations in Iran, and there can be little doubt that a general mood of war weariness exists in both countries.

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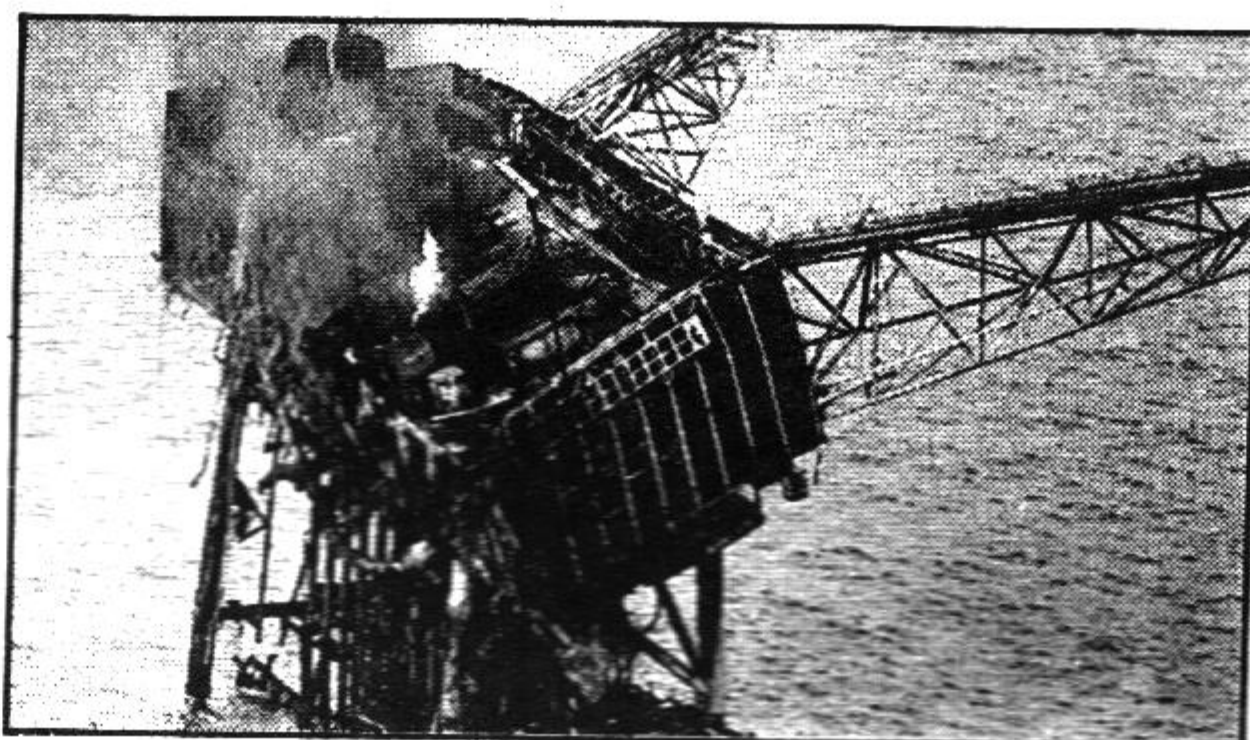
## THE COST OF CAPITALISM NOT THE PRICE OF OIL

Financial gain is a good motive in any murder mystery. The difference in the Piper Alpha case is that it is a system and not an individual which stands in the dock. Forget the pious crap about these horrific deaths being "the price of oil". This is exactly the same sanctimonious line they used to take towards mining disasters in the last century. The Piper Alpha horror can only be called an accident by twisting the meaning of one word. It was a twelve year old rig on which corrosion was so bad that there 3 pipe leaks every week. Many workers used painkillers to dull gas-induced headaches and in the weeks before the final explosion there had been 3 other fires. Add to this the fact that the rig was built to accommodate 200 workers and there were 27 more than that on it on the night of the disaster. Most of the survivors tell of cuts in the maintenance and replacement programmes. None of this was the fault of the safety workers on board who tried to carry out the most rigorous of procedures.

But Piper Alpha was producing 167,000 barrels of oil a day (despite being built to produce only a maximum of 150,000). It was flogged unmercifully in the name of profit, both for the owners, Occidental Oil and the British Government who benefitted from the tax revenue. In return safety regulations in this the most dangerous off-shore operation in the world were lower than anywhere else.

Add to this another factor - deregulation. Getting rid of those inconvenient little laws which so hamper private enterprise is like holding a knife to someone's throat to force them to work. On Piper Alpha only 31 of the 166 killed actually were on the pay-roll of Occidental Oil. All the rest worked for sub-contracting firms or were "self-employed" and recruited by job agencies. Many of this latter group had, until a few years ago worked for one of the big oil firms but were laid off by them then taken on again as "casual workers" at much reduced wages (for an 84 hour week production workers got less than 800 pounds a month, catering staff got just over 3 pounds an hour). As well as low wages there are savings on the pension funds the firms don't have to pay etc. And this isn't just true of oil but of the British economy generally.

The model case is the construction industry. Here the big firms have reduced their workforce to below one million whilst nearly half a million building workers now claim "714" tax exemption certificates (i.e that they are self-employed). At the same time accidents have increased by 45% since 1980.



The Health and Safety Executive which is supposed to inspect industrial premises has been fighting an uphill battle since 20% of their factory inspectors have been cut in the same period. Obviously the Government must have read the bit in Karl Marx's "Capital" where he praises the independence and objectivity of the British factory inspectors of the last century!

Before anyone gets steamed up about it all being the fault of "Thatcherism" they might ask what Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition have been saying about all this. Not a lot. Whilst one Labour MP did manage to embarrass the Government over the Kings Cross disaster little has been said about the Piper Alpha horror. No-one wants to criticise the goose that lays the golden egg of British capitalism. All that the Labour Party can say is that all we need are a few reforms and everything will be all right. Labour's reforms (like the NHS) are to improve the health of British capitalism, not the health of those who work for it. The central core of the problem remains the profits system. It is this which has prevented machinery being stopped for cleaning and maintenance since the capitalist system started. It is the pursuit of profit which will kill 600 workers and injure another 154,000 in Britain this year. It is just one more reason why revolutionaries have dedicated themselves to overthrowing and not reforming capitalism.

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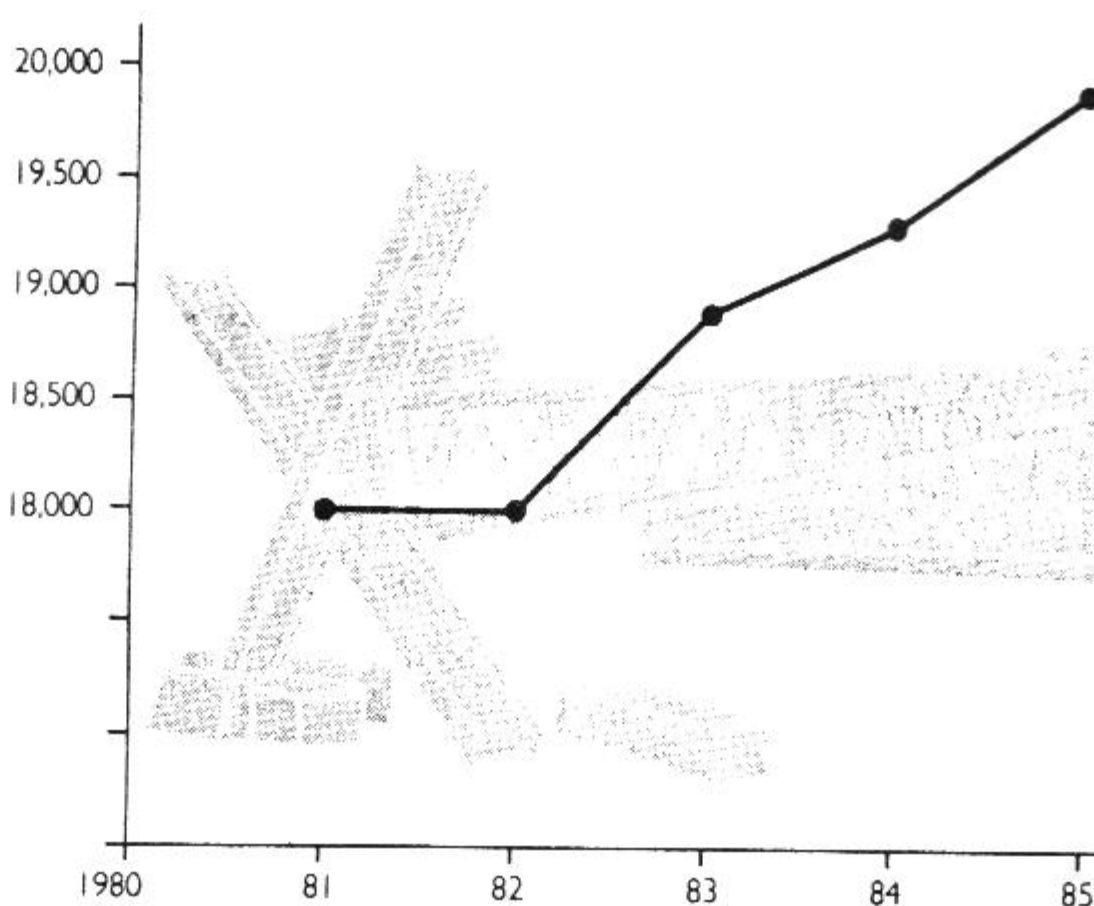
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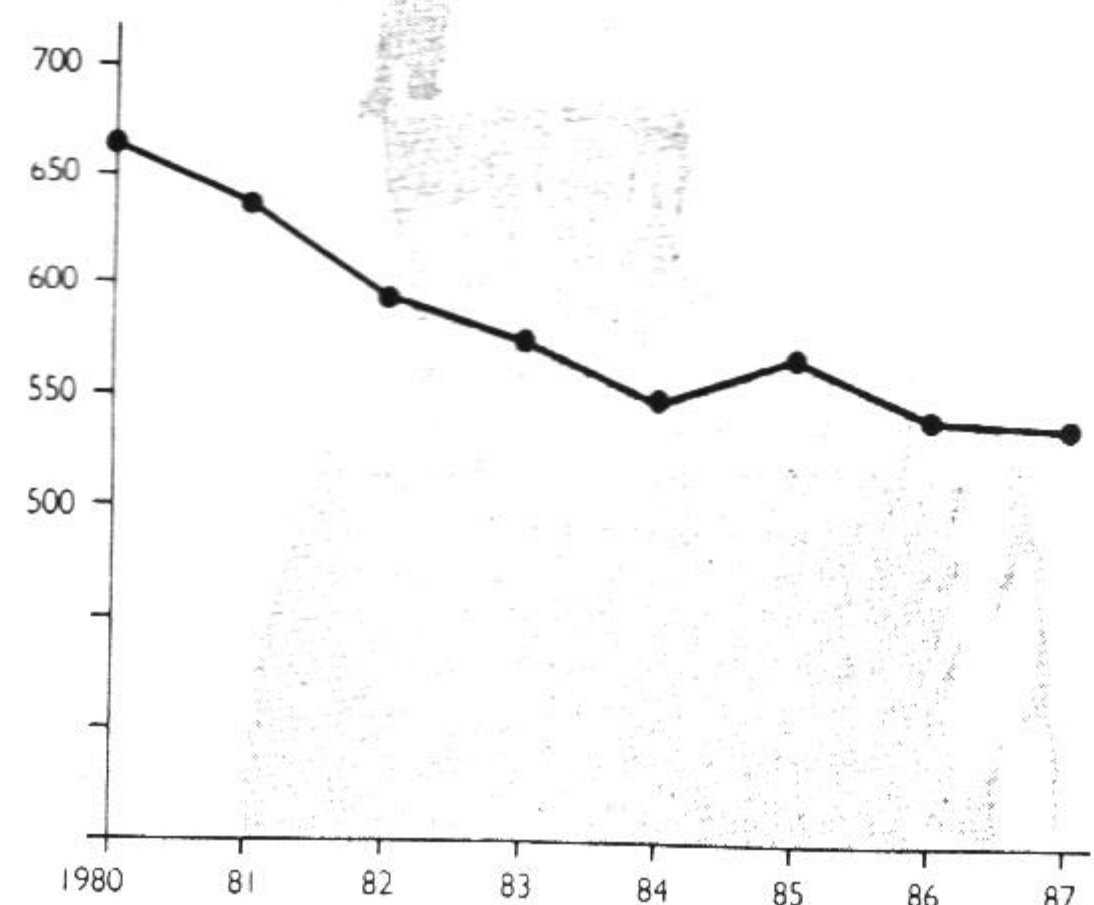
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Occupational accidents: major injuries\*



Number of factory inspectors in the field\*



\*Source: Health and Safety Commission annual report

## THE IRAN/IRAQ WAR

continued from page 1

In both countries the war with its external threat and internal repression has consolidated the regimes. The ending of the war could remove the cement which held the regimes together, especially when it is realised that there is absolutely nothing to show for 8 years of suffering, over a million deaths, over 2 million crippled and the destruction of the economy. Both regimes could now collapse.

### COMMUNISTS AND THE WAR

From the start the CWO has argued that the working class had no interest in fighting this war and that it was the task of communists to propagandise for revolutionary defeatism. This meant agitating for anti-war strikes at the rear and for fraternisation at the front. We argued that this would have provided an orientation for revival of the class struggle and the destruction of the regimes. Unfortunately, the political groupings in Iran and Iraq, with whom we polemicalised in the early stages of the war, rejected this course in favour of flirtation with bourgeois nationalism of one sort or another. Support for nationalism today always means abandoning the interests of the working class for those of the capitalists, and these groups are today integrated with the nationalist gangs who have become nothing more than tools of the Iraqi or Iranian war machine.

Agitation for revolutionary defeatism could have created an echo in today's war weary armies and population which could have brought about a vast strengthening of communist forces in the Gulf area. This has not occurred and the resistance to the regimes which develops will be without communist influence and leadership. However, both regimes now face difficult days, and it is the task of the remaining communist forces to regroup and use the weakness of the regimes to denounce the war and the capitalist forces behind it and to agitate for fresh class struggle and the destruction of both regimes.

### SWP: THE VEIL SLIPS

The SWP attracts many honest militants through its criticism of the anti-socialist nature of the "Soviet" Union. Nevertheless, its politics are not the politics of Marxism: it believes that national liberation is a step towards socialism even today (after the glorious examples of Vietnam, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Cuba, Angola, ...) and it is ambiguous on the imperialism of the USSR.

Like all (pseudo-) Trotskyists, the SWP hasn't learnt that the enemy of US imperialism is not necessarily the friend of the working class.

Usually, the sophisticated ambiguity of their politics disguises the anti-proletarian nature of their activity fairly well, but on the Iran-Iraq war the veil has slipped. In a fraternal criticism of the "anti-imperialist" Khomeini we read

"If he had used the revolutionary enthusiasm and organisation to fight the war, the chances of success would have been far greater. But Khomeini saw the war as much as a way of outflanking the left at home as of fighting imperialism.

"If Khomeini had mobilised the Kurds to fight imperialism" (sic!) "instead of repressing them, if the Iranian leadership had encouraged workers to exercise control over the war" (self-managed massacres!) "against imperialism instead" (sic!) "of intensifying their exploitation, if they had encouraged the participation of Iranian women and not oppressed them, then the war could have been won." (sic!) (Socialist Worker, 23 July 1988)

In other words, Khomeini failed to make the best use of enthusiasm for a revolution he had helped defeat ... to mobilise workers for the slaughter!



# "GREENHOUSE EFFECT": CAPITALISM IS THE HOTHOUSE

Ecologists have once again been ringing alarm bells about the beginning of the end of the planet. In the next 40 or 50 years the greenhouse gases in the atmosphere (carbon dioxide, but increasingly methane, ozone, nitrous oxide, and chloro-fluorocarbons) will double. The earth's atmosphere will get warmer by between 1.5 and 4 degrees. An extra one degree would make the world warmer than it has been for 120,000 years. A change of four degrees would represent the difference between now and the depths of the last ice age. A rise in sea level of a metre, due to the warming of the polar ice caps, would have potentially catastrophic effects in the deltas of the Nile, Ganges, Mekong, Yangtze and Mississippi. Presented to an atomised population under a moribund capitalism as an irrevocable 'fact of nature', as a process beyond our control, such messages of prophetic gloom, as with the galloping spread of AIDS, or the inevitability of nuclear war, or the widening hole in the ozone layer, serve to spread a feeling of powerlessness and despair. How should workers and communists respond?

## SIFTING TRUTH FROM SENSATIONALISM

A preliminary step is the sifting of truth from sensation. The "Greenhouse Effect" gained peculiar urgency recently as the drought in the USA's great plains began to eat into the American grain surpluses. According to the ecologists the higher latitudes will warm more quickly than the those nearer the Equator. This will mean a loss of soil moisture in those areas of the northern hemisphere where the bulk of the world's grain is grown. Headlines suddenly appeared "Pollution Threatens to Scorch the Earth". But similar sensational messages appeared in the hot summer of '76, in a decade which saw a great deal of alarmism over the so-called "energy crises", which had a transparent financial origin in the Arab bourgeoisie's raising of oil prices. It is not difficult to find an article on an impending ice age during any severe, snowy winter.

The panic and paranoia of the petty-bourgeoisie are usually traceable to conjunctural twists and turns in the evolution of capitalism's economic crisis. As we said in a recent article

"The petty-bourgeois or utopian 'critique' of capitalism concentrates on the secondary manifestations of capitalism's basic (economic)

contradiction, takes them as primary and argues that by challenging these, capitalist relations can be overthrown. Thus the petty-bourgeoisie MARGINALISES the anti-capitalist struggle from the class front to the areas of sexuality, disarmament, racialism, and environmental issues." ("Marxism and Nature" in WORKERS VOICE 23. This is our seminal statement of the communist position on environmentalism.)

Although the USA is experiencing its worst drought for 50 years there is not necessarily any direct causal link with the "Greenhouse Effect". A more objective appraisal would place it in the wider context of world climatological history. World climate is influenced by many factors - unexplained solar fluctuations, volcanic activity, oceanic current shifts etc. Many factors acting together result in a climate that behaves rather like waves of different lengths superimposed on each other. This can result in climate cycles of any duration between two and several hundred years, all taking place within a much longer interglacial period of a few thousand years. Since accurate weather reports are a very recent affair it requires a great deal more empirical research and theoretical refinement before we can establish the extent of a "Greenhouse Effect".

## THE REAL PROBLEM IS THE CAPITALIST SYSTEM

Such scientific research is the last thing the present system will offer us. If the UK is anything to go by scientific research is going out of fashion. Large-scale cuts have just been announced in the Natural Environment Research Council where 130 scientific posts are to go. The majority of these will be at the Institute of Oceanographic Sciences, even though many scientists argue that oceanographic research is crucial to the understanding of the global warming now taking place. Planned university research in this area is to be cut by 2.6 million pounds this year. The biggest engineering project of the century, the Channel Tunnel, will be undertaken across an area known to contain volcanic faults. By the continuous and selective squeeze on scientific funding the Government is effectively banning any prognostic seismic research in this area. Is there a clearer illustration of the fact that the scope of theoretical science, as well as its practical application, are both determined by the need

to make a quick profit?

Even when some of the more "green" of the bourgeoisie do create opportunities for scientists to put the case for greater care of the environment they are universally ignored. Take for example the "top level" "Conference on the Changing Atmosphere" held recently in Toronto, which was attended by politicians, scientists and ecologists from 48 countries. Here there was a call for the reduction on polluting emissions and the first tentative steps towards a 'law of the atmosphere'. What are the possibilities that those in power will heed any of the environmentalists bleak warnings? In a world divided by ruthlessly competing individual, national and imperialist capitalist interests - very little. As we said in WORKERS VOICE 23

"It is the existence of economic rivalry in the market place, and the COST of pollution removal that makes the capitalist unwilling and/or unable to reduce the problem to controllable dimensions. Eliminate the profit motive and most pollution can be eliminated."

Given the very limited measures so far undertaken to control acid rain and chloro-fluorocarbons (CFCs) at the Montreal Conference, despite the fact that they are technically more straightforward issues, and given that the burning of fossil fuels is so central to the economic mechanisms of capitalism, it is difficult to see any headway being made in controlling the "Greenhouse Effect" in the near future.

However this is not a cause for despondency but a call to recognise that the preservation of the planet will not come about through ecological conferences or environmental pressure groups. As we wrote three years ago

"Environmental catastrophe is not capitalism's real crisis, nor are the ecologists its real critics: its real crisis lies in its inability to produce profitably and its real enemy, which it attacks as a consequence is the working class." (WORKERS VOICE 23)

The whole history of humanity has been a constant struggle to control nature. The motor force of that increased control has been the class struggle. Today we are at the final hurdle when the working class is confronting the most wasteful and earth-polluting system in the history of humanity. On the outcome of that struggle the fate our species depends.

## STRIKE AT VSEL

The shipyard workers at Vickers (VSEL) of Barrow have now been on strike for over two months against the management's plan to force through fixed holidays for everyone in a bid to further raise productivity.

Managing director Rodney Leach told the press: "When you have a super workforce, as we have, but one a bit set in its ways, any change creates a slight feeling of insecurity..."

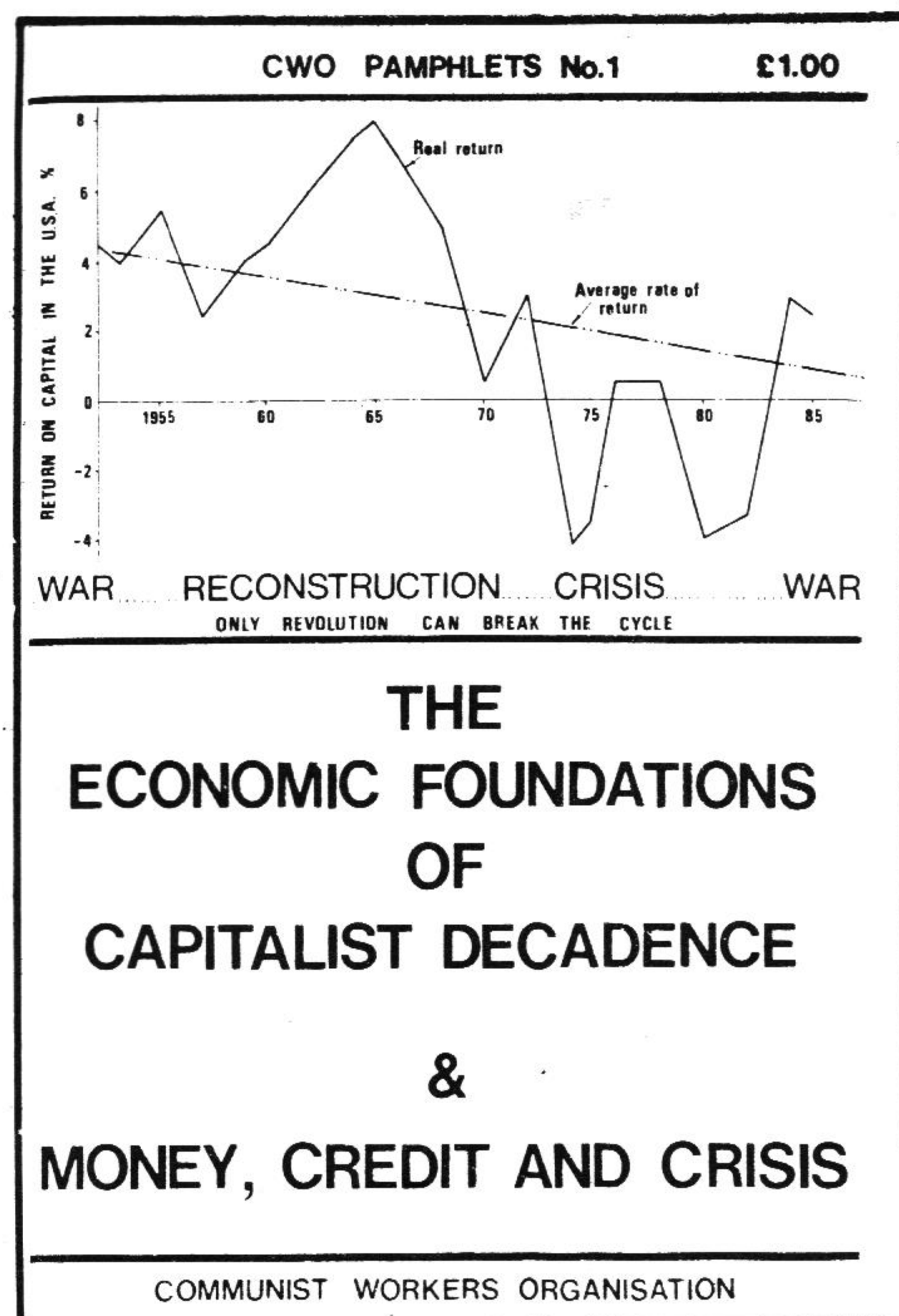
Translated, this means "when you have been able to get away with murder for years it takes you by surprise when the workers won't fall for one more attack on their living standards." Unlike other shipyards Vickers, being a defence yard, has full order books. The workers here aren't like those on Tyneside, Clydeside or in Belfast, who are threatened with lay-offs.

Vickers workers are -to say the least, not renowned for their militancy (this

is the first "official all-out strike" in the history of the firm. The strike shows what loyalty to the firm and to the country, those virtues which all bourgeois political parties preach, get you - another kick in the teeth! This isn't just a lesson for Barrow workers but for workers everywhere. Our only loyalty is class loyalty to each other.

## AUSTRIA TEXT OF THE GIK

In WORKERS' VOICE 41 we stated that we would be publishing an article from ARBEITERPOLITIK, journal of the Gruppe Internationalistische Kommunisten (GIK). However the article in question is rather longer than we had estimated. The CWO will now be recommending to the IBRP that it be published in our central organ, COMMUNIST REVIEW. Those who read German could send for the article, "Die Sparpolitik der SPÖ-OVP Regierung", to the GIK, Postfach 536, 1061 Wien, Austria.





# PERESTROIKA AND THE CRISIS OF RUSSIAN STATE CAPITALISM

GORBACHEVISM: A "NEW SOCIALISM FOR A NEW MILLENNIUM"

The Western media have hailed enthusiastically Gorbachev's plans for political reforms outlined in the 19th All-Russian Conference of the so-called "Communist Party of the Soviet Union" (CPSU). The FINANCIAL TIMES considered that Gorbachev had "embarked on the most dramatic changes in Soviet society ... possibly since the 1917 Revolution". THE GUARDIAN, the day after the conference (29th June) declared "The world shifts on its axis". The world's first proletarian revolution merely shook the world but it was to take a Mikhail Gorbachev to put it into a spin single-handed! Marxists have a more objective view. "Perestroika" (restructuring) is for us a clear manifestation of the capitalist nature of the Soviet Union (1). Faced with a deepening crisis, Russia, like the other capitalist nations also has to rationalise its economy to make it more competitive on the world market and to maintain its military strength.

## THE CRISIS OF RUSSIAN CAPITAL

When Gorbachev took over as general secretary of the CPSU in 1985 he inherited a system that was undergoing a crisis of historic proportions. A few facts may serve to illustrate the scale of some of the problems. A near constant orientation of the economy towards the military had meant a retardation of modernisation in the civil sectors. The lack of productivity there is compensated for by the use of extensive labour power. During the first half of the 80s the labour force had only risen by 3% - it was 6% during the 70s. The output of the extractive industries (coal, oil etc) had barely gone up by 5% compared with 20% during the 70s and capital investment rose by only 17% compared with 40% in the 70s. And according to official figures GNP slowed markedly from 5.1% per year (1971-5) to 3.1% in 1985.

With increasing difficulty in generating a sufficient mass of profit from a swelling organic composition of capital at home, the USSR turned to the world market in the 70s. But by the 80s her economic position vis-a-vis the West was rapidly worsening. In 1984 while the USA's GNP stood at \$3627 billions that of the USSR was \$1400 billions followed closely by Japan at \$1307 billions. In terms of industrial production Japan has overtaken the USSR. In 1973 27% of Russia's exports to the OECD countries consisted of "technology derived" products. By 1982 this figure had sagged to 9%. Having committed itself to compete on the world market the USSR has to face direct economic pressure from the Western bloc. The fall in oil and other raw material prices, which are largely controlled by the Western bourgeoisie, has resulted in a tremendous loss of income for the USSR amounting to one third of its potential hard currency earnings which are vital for the purchase of modernising technology.

Production of low quality unsaleable goods has always been a hallmark of Russian state capitalism but over the past decade the growth of stockpiled remainders has come to surpass overall economic growth by 300%. In 1981 the national revenue increased by 24.5 billion roubles, but the volume of remaindered goods by 29.5 billion roubles. The ratio of the value of unsold goods to new commodity values was 13% in 1965 but 77% by 1981.

It became clear that the ruling class could no longer continue to rule in the old way. The reform programme assumes that the the problem of the Soviet economy lies in the excessive concentration of central authority. Although this is a (not inconsiderable) part of the problem it is only a superficial aspect of it. Over-centralisation has always characterised the Soviet economy but the reason that there is a crisis today is because of the rise in the organic

composition of capital. The state bourgeoisie is no more capable of solving it than its counterpart in the West.

## POLITICAL REFORMS

Political commentators have presented Gorbachev's rhetoric about giving "all power to the soviets" (sic!) and separating Party and State as the first shots in a new political "revolution". The ghost of Lenin has been conjured up to give posthumous approval to these steps. But what do they really amount to?

Gorbachev has proposed the creation of a presidential system. This presumably meant to appear very 'modern'. There will be a system of elected councils with everyone having the right to vote. These councils will vote for a new congress of 2250 elected delegates. This congress would meet annually and have the power to elect a president every five years. But this system is just the old one in new clothes. The national congress of deputies will be elected, not by the voters, but by local party representatives. "Democracy" will consist of the right NOT to choose a specific party leader with the added "privilege" of being able to elect another official nominee of the Party!

In the June CPSU Congress great play was made of the controversy and debate in the hall and comparisons between it and the days when the soviets really were proletarian organs were drawn. But in reality the outcome of the conference was never in much doubt as a safe compromise had been worked out beforehand between the Gorbachev and conservative Ligachev factions. Gorbachev's democracy has nothing in common with workers power. Under proletarian democracy there will be no privileged bureaucratic class drawing up the rules. The function of soviet democracy will be to administer production and distribution to satisfy human needs and not to act as a figleaf for an oppressive and exploitative state apparatus.

"Democratisation" plays another role for the Gorbachev faction. "Going to the people" is a way of undermining the resistance of the conservative and entrenched bureaucracy. Mobilising controlled popular pressure for reform by fomenting animosity against a delimited strata of the "nomenklatura" is however a dangerous game to play as it can unleash waves of unrest which are not easily controlled e.g. the nationalist disturbances in Armenia. It is a price the Gorbachev camp



Russia's crisis is nowhere deeper than in the agricultural sector. Failure to deliver the goods here cost previous Russian "reformers" their jobs.

seem willing and perhaps have no other choice in paying.

## INTERNAL OPPOSITION

The aim of Gorbachev is to shift the political centre of gravity from the bureaucracy which is clogged with careerists to the scientific-technical intelligentsia. Not surprisingly the latter have been the only sector of society to give perestroika an unqualified welcome. But it would be an error to overestimate the independent political weight of this group. It is no match for the bureaucracy.

And the bureaucracy are fighting for their basic interests, most notably job security. In Russian state capitalism privilege flows not from property but from administrative office. If the reforms are carried out consistently they will bring large cuts in administrative staff affecting numerous middle levels of the bureaucracy as well as dozens of ministries controlling various branches of industry and various state committees. The middle-ranking Party functionaries could lose the powerful roles they have held for 60 years as territorial economic co-ordinators, supervisors, fixers and pushers. Another interest at stake is the nomenklatura system of cadre selection. Party apparatchniks and higher economic administrators stand to lose their powers to appoint managers. This has been crucial for the building of power-bases and in the accompanying accumulation of privileges, sometimes on a grandiose scale e.g. as in Uzbekistan. The bureaucracy will not easily concede all this and will find high level support for its obstructionism.

## THE WORKING CLASS

The economic reforms Gorbachev wants would lead to a direct attack on the working class. The enterprise directors would have to produce more efficiently for the market. Cutting labour costs would be the easiest way to do this. Wages would be more closely tied to output and wage differentials would increase. Food subsidies, which cost three times the official defence budget, and other aspects of the social wage would be cut. The chronic labour shortage would end to be replaced by unemployment.

The current response of the 92 million strong urban and rural proletariat is one of scepticism. With three years of perestroika and no improvements in the supply and quality of consumer goods any changes in the workplace would soon lead to anger. Already there is a clearer perception of class differences. Young workers today are born in the city, not the village, and are themselves the children of workers. They have known neither the Terror, the "Great Patriotic War" nor the material deprivation of their elders. Gorbachev will have to divide them by buying off a sizeable section as Thatcher has in the UK if he is to succeed. But the Russian working class is not without a history of militancy, even in the last few years.

Despite the news blackout we have been able to report about some strikes and demonstrations in the past (See, for example, REVOLUTIONARY PERSPECTIVES 7 and 19 - both one pound from the group address). Just

## COMMUNIST REVIEW No 6

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- \* New Technologies and Capitalist Exploitation
- \* Gorbachev's Restructuring of Russian Capitalism
- \* Gramsci's Concept of Hegemony

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before the 19th Conference opened there was news about a strike in Novocherkassk in 1962 which had been reported for the first time only this June. An untold number of workers were shot in this strike which involved nearly all the 14,000 workers at a locomotive plant. They had been protesting at new price rises on milk, meat, eggs and other food products which coincided with a wage cut of 35%. The episode ended with the local garrison using tanks which shot down the demonstration of workers carrying red flags and portraits of Lenin. We refer to it here because it reflects both the strengths and weaknesses of the situation of the working class in the Eastern bloc. The working class in Russia is the biggest in the world and it is still concentrated in huge plants the like of which are now a rarity in the West. They have not had their confidence undermined by over a decade of de-industrialisation (which our bourgeoisie also call "perestroika") and mass unemployment. They are also acutely class conscious (the workers at Novocherkassk had initially swept the Army aside with the cry "Here come the workers"). However they have no continuity of independent political organisation. Those who tried to achieve it in the past have languished in the gulags. Any resistance to restructuring must begin from a blank sheet. This means that the spontaneous struggles which the Russian workers have shown themselves adept at

throughout history could be derailed onto nationalist and religious demands as happened in Poland and as could happen in Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Whatever the outcome the most likely perspective in the short-term is for what Lenin called "a crisis at the top" within the bureaucratic regime itself. Although the supporters of perestroika have the upper hand at present they have little to show for it and their conservative opponents are only waiting for the new reforms to fail before they fight back. Whichever faction wins this struggle the task of the working class remains the same - to nail the historic lie of the 20th century, that communism exists in the state capitalist, imperialist "Soviet" Union.

(1) The capitalist nature of Russia is defined by the commodity character of labour power and the accumulation of capital based on the extraction of surplus value. For an elaboration of this position see **REVOLUTIONARY PERSPECTIVES 19 AND "Gorbachev's Reconstruction of Russian Capital" in COMMUNIST REVIEW 6.** Both available (one pound) from our London address.

## ...MORE STRIKES IN YUGOSLAVIA

Yugoslavia used to be portrayed as the place where the workers had control over their own lives and ran their "own" factories. But over the last few years the capitalist crisis has dented this image. There have been a succession of strikes in the place which might have claimed to have invented "perestroika". The myth of self-management has been exposed as a con. Being allowed to manage their own exploitation whilst the state pockets the surplus value they create has brought Yugoslav workers monthly wages of less than 30 pounds (126,000 dinars). Now they have had enough. In June workers in Maribor in north west Yugoslavia took to the streets for three days in protest at low wages whilst workers from Velika Kladusa (Bosnia) also struck when the Government used a financial scandal at their agricultural machinery plant as an excuse to lay off 5000 of the 13,000 workforce. They marched on the capital, Belgrade to protest. But the workers of Yugoslavia's largest rubber and shoe plant at Borovo went one better. 4000 of them invaded the Parliament building (62 miles from the factory) "in an action unprecedented in Yugoslavia's post-war history" according to Associated Press. The "Communist Party has not been slow to act - not to concede the 40% wage demands - but to stir up ethnic disputes between the majority Serbo-Croats and other nationalities in the hope of dividing and controlling the workers. But it is a dangerous game and indicates the depth of the crisis in the Eastern bloc.

## CORRESPONDENCE

### ROSA LUXEMBURG AND THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

Dear Comrades

I have just received Workers Voice No. 41 and will read it with great interest as always. I have read through the article on the Russian Revolution; and have some brief comments to make.

With good reason I think one might say that you are not particularly fond of Rosa Luxemburg or the German communist tradition. But whatever your opinion you should treat them in a fair manner.

You use Carr to quote from "What the Spartacus League Wants" and his quote is in my opinion taken completely out of context. If you read Luxemburg's article you will find further on things that change the meaning of Carr's quotation quite a lot. Thus Carr, and consequently you, give a false impression of what Luxemburg writes. I will not quote from the text, you can read it yourselves.

But perhaps even worse than distorting Luxemburg's views is that you use Carr as your source. In my opinion you should have named a source for the text where the whole text can be found. Using Carr you make it more difficult than necessary for your readers to find this text if they should wish to read the whole text. I think this especially important as this text was published in English only two years ago in "The German Revolution and the Debate on Soviet Power" (Pathfinder Press) pages 118-26.

I also think that your final comments on "The Russian Revolution" are written in order to distort Luxemburg's views even more. To mention Luxemburg just for the sake of argument is totally worthless. If you wish to attack Luxemburg this is perfectly legitimate but you have to do it properly.

That's all for now

fraternally

NEK

OUR REPLY

Dear Comrade

Thank you for your speedy response to the article on the Red Terror in the series "Revolution and counter-revolution in Russia". We don't think it very helpful to refer to the communist heritage in terms of our "fondness" or not for this or that character or tendency. We retain a critical approach to both the distant ancestors of the proletarian camp of today and towards our own more recent political development. Thus the tendency which we adhere to has for nearly half a century proclaimed the correctness of Luxemburg's position on the national question (see the first (clandestine) edition of "Prometeo" of 1943) nor would we wish to minimise the eloquent way in which she defended many basic proletarian positions.

However on the question of political organisation and, in particular, the question of violence we emphatically deny that we have in any way distorted her position. It is a pity

that you don't actually quote the passages that you consider "change the meaning quite a lot" of the quotation we gave. Do you mean the passage where she says "The struggle for socialism is the greatest civil war in history" or "The power of the bourgeois counter-revolution must be met by the revolutionary power of the working class" or yet again where she calls for "The arming of the entire adult male (sic) population as the workers militia". (All quotations from the booklet "Spartacus" published by Merlin Press (London, April 1971) p.33)? In view of the fact that she begins this passage with the idea that "The proletarian revolution requires no terror for the realisation of its aims; it looks upon manslaughter with hatred and aversion" (p.32) we must ask "what IS she actually saying?"

This only becomes clearer when you look at the work as a whole. She talks about "the compact mass of working people" "called upon to carry out their historic mission" repeatedly. But not once does she give any concrete idea of how this will be organised. There is no recognition of the fact that workers will come to class consciousness unevenly or that until it is defeated the bourgeoisie will have the capacity, in one form or another, to win over the wavering from the ranks of the working class. For Luxemburg "mass action" has a mystical (or mystificatory) quality which will solve all problems. In regard to the violence of the bourgeoisie it is a talisman which can shield the workers from all evil. In the end, of course communism will only be a really new society if it involves the mass of the population but that is the END of the process. Luxemburg seems to confuse the end with the beginning. She doesn't recognise how this mass action will grow and has no conception of the role of the party in the process. In short we are back to the issues of class consciousness and the mechanics of revolution neither of which Luxemburg ever really gets to grips with. Her phrases about mass action are all very stimulating and enjoyable to read but they don't

take us one step nearer to the conquest of power or to the survival of any workers state in advance of a more general world revolution. The nearest she gets to a response to bourgeois terror is to state that "the proletariat enters the arena with no naive illusions, the dispersal of which would prompt it to have recourse to revenge" (op cit p.32). You can make of this what you will but we think it does not promise more than a repeat of past massacres for the proletariat.

But our aim was not to attack Luxemburg per se in this article on red terror. Rather than give our readers an abstract starting point we could begin from a real position held by a communist of the time. And as the article goes on to show, the Bolsheviks, even though better armed theoretically still did not grasp that;

"...there is only one way of SHORTENING, simplifying and concentrating the murderous death-pangs of the old society, the bloody birth-pangs of the new, only ONE WAY - REVOLUTIONARY TERRORISM!"

Karl Marx "The Victory of the Counter-Revolution in Vienna" November 7 1848 in "The Revolutions of 1848" (Penguin Books, London 1973).

Luxemburg's critique of the Russian Revolution takes little account of the need for red terror to defend the working class. In fact she specifically attacks the red terror in three different places in her pamphlet, "The Russian Revolution". When it is remembered that the pamphlet was written towards the end of 1918, when the workers in Russia were under attack from 14 armies and that leading Bolsheviks were already being assassinated by SRs, her liberal democratic strictures about recalling the Constituent Assembly, about freedom for the bourgeoisie etc just strike us as grotesque. She certainly does not see the need for specialist organs (subordinate to the Soviet power) to carry out this red terror. Therefore we reject the idea that we have distorted the essence of her thought on the question.

What it does raise in our mind is exactly where do you stand on the issue? We tried to show in the article that the workers will always be slow to respond to bourgeois terror and we also argued that the red terror became a terror against the workers because it was not controlled by the soviets which virtually ceased to exist during the civil war. As to our deeper differences with Rosa Luxemburg's political theory the views we hold are framed by our views on class consciousness (just as Rosa Luxemburg's are) and these you will find outlined in our text "Class Consciousness in the Marxist Perspective" which can be found in Revolutionary Perspectives No.21. We would like to hear your comments on this since this seems to be the real issue between us.

Lastly we only used Carr (the neo-Stalinist) because his translation is more comprehensible than either of the Trotskyist versions we have. Nothing else.

Communist greetings

CWO

## REVOLUTIONARY PERSPECTIVES

— PLUS —

- Iran: tasks of communists
- Decadence and Materialism
- Lenin's Political Thought
- The Italian Left



## CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE MARXIST PERSPECTIVE

Theoretical Journal of the Communist Workers Organisation

No 21

75p

### REVOLUTION AND COUNTER REVOLUTION IN RUSSIA

Part 4 of this series will continue in **WORKERS' VOICE** 43 with an article on the factory committees and organs of workers democracy 1917-21.



# VIOLENCE: FACT OF CAPITALIST LIFE



The start of the offensive in Toxteth on 4 July 1981.

For some Tory MP's like Norman Tebbit, the rising tide of soccer violence is a product of the "permissive age". According to one senior Conservative backbencher it is a result of "the way families are raised". For Labour MP's the Government is to blame, along with the values created by Thatcherism. For Roy Hattersley, young people were violent because they were too affluent and were encouraged in their views by a Government which had spent "almost a decade extolling the virtues of getting rich quick". The Left generally places the blame squarely on Thatcherism.

All, however, are united in condemning soccer violence, since it gives England a bad reputation abroad, and, most importantly, they believe it is part of the wider trend of civil disturbances which have swept the country, hitting the inner cities and rural areas alike. As one police chief put it, it is now common place for officers to answer calls on disturbances in riot gear, something unheard of in rural areas until quite recently.

Football violence, however, is nothing new. Fights at football matches have been going on since the 1880's and have been getting worse since the 1960's. But what separates the violence of today from the violence of the past, are the attitudes of many of the worst offenders. When English football "fans" rioted in West Germany in June, MP's united in condemning their actions. In fact, the modern football hooligan is a very good representative of today's values, passed down by the ruling class and popularised in the tabloids. For the ruling class, ideas are only useful if they help protect the well being of capitalism, and so notions such as aggressive competition and self-preservation are important. The working class is encouraged to identify with its bosses in the same country, and is encouraged to be suspicious of, or to regard as inferior, other workers in other countries. At home the ruling class

tries to divide workers by making some workers think they are superior to others because of race and sex. Black, Asian and female workers are still the most badly paid in the country and tend to be given the worst jobs. In the family, most working class women have very low status and are still doing the bulk of the work in the home, as well as holding down jobs outside, while gay workers living outside the family structure are being depicted as abnormal under Clause 28. On top of that, many black and Asian families are allocated the worst housing, and in some cases are being evicted from local councils because they were born abroad, and so have made themselves "intentionally homeless" (according to one London borough). It's little wonder, then, that some of the capitalists' ideology is being taken to its logical conclusion by football hooligans. Attacking foreigners, singing the national anthem and waving the Union Jack were all OK during the Falklands war, as one bewildered fan in Dusseldorf pointed out. Some have even crossed over to Nazi organisations, such as were in evidence giving Nazi salutes in Stuttgart.

But the majority of young workers have not turned to the ruling class for guidance. The recent spate of rural riots have been condemned by politicians and the press alike as part of the same trend of soccer violence. Roy Hattersley said it was even the same people. Just as the inner city riots were blamed at the time on drugs and race, the riots in the smaller towns and villages are being blamed on alcohol and money. Skirmishes between the youths of rival towns have always taken place, but what is new is the fact that youths are attacking the police instead of each other. Similarities with football hooligans exist mostly in the minds of the ruling class. Instead of chants of "Sieg Heil", rioters at Basingstoke shouted at the police and chanted "fascist pigs". In riots in Devon, in Surrey, in Croydon, in the Yorkshire Dales, the old pit villages, in Coalville

and Humberside, and in Plymouth, the violence was mostly directed against the police.

As with the inner city riots, the ruling class cannot admit the real cause of these riots because it has no cure for them. It cannot get rid of the frustration and anger felt by many young people at their working conditions, or of their boredom and lack of prospects. Most have no job security or job safety, many have no jobs at all, and Government training schemes are barely able to hide the fact they are merely schemes for cheap labour.

The ruling class is happy to associate strikers and rioters with criminals and football hooligans and dismiss the whole thing as part of the rising tide of violence in today's society. Of course it's much more serious than that. The ruling class knows it can never get rid of class struggle, but as long as it pretends class violence is merely the work of hooligans, it can increase its repression.

Those politicians who blame the violence on the permissive age can tighten their hold on censorship, and so better control the flow of ideas. Douglas Hurd believes "personal responsibility, self discipline and civic duty can best be delivered through the school curriculum", and is eager to see his class-based values taught in the schools. Those who blame alcohol call for identity cards, which is preferable to hitting the alcohol industry (which, after all, has just been granted extended licensing hours and a favourable budget). Identity cards need not be confined to pubs, and already chief police officers are working on a national identity card which would not be restricted to football grounds or pubs, but which could store a vast amount of useful information for the police, including access to criminal records, Poll Tax payments, medical history and previous employment records. It is possible that more information could be stored on such a card without the holders knowledge.

The police and politicians are no doubt grateful that football hooliganism has given them the opportunity to step up law and order. While they happily pose as the defenders of people against assault and violent attacks, they govern a system where violence is the norm not only in individual attacks on the street or in the home, (as part of the family structure,) but also as part of the production process. Capitalism needs violence most of all, in its wars, which are necessary for it to survive. The danger facing the ruling class is, no matter how much repression it heaps upon workers in struggle, it can never legislate away classes or class conflict, and can never avoid the eruption of violence that will finally destroy it.

## LESSONS OF THE P&O STRIKE SOLIDARITY IS THE ONLY ROAD

The workers on the Dover picket lines have refused to go away. Despite facing the full weight of the state's anti-working class laws, despite being abandoned by "their" union, the NUS, the men and women who used to work for P&O are continuing the fight.

However it is a fight which is becoming daily more difficult to sustain. More and more it begins to look like the struggle at Wapping or during the miners strike. The lessons of all three struggles are the same. No sector of workers, however self-sacrificing, can win on their own. The only power the bosses fear is the united force of the working class. The seafarers did try to extend their struggle, not only to all ferryworkers in Britain but also to French workers. However they found out that all unions, not just the EETPU, are barriers to effective strikes. The NUS was more concerned for its officials' funds than for the workers' struggle. They diverted the united fight of all the ferryworkers against the ferry companies into a single battle between P&O and their workers. In such a fight there can only be one winner.

McCluskie has talked much of his readiness

to sacrifice himself for the Dover workers but talk is cheap. In real terms he has all but signed a no-strike deal with Sealink who are the biggest beneficiaries of the struggle. They have had to risk nothing to get what has cost P&O millions. The fight has cost the ferryworkers more than their jobs with P&O. They now face worsening working conditions with every operator.

### THE LESSONS

The lessons for workers everywhere after the last five years of retreat are the same. No trust in the union officials to organise support and solidarity. The support of everyone can only be guaranteed through holding regular mass meetings to organise picketing and extensions of the struggle. Ignore the Government's laws. These are only aimed at the union and the union doesn't release the money it holds to fight the strike anyway.

But the real lessons have to be understood by those workers who have not been directly attacked - it will be their turn next time. Many miners in Nottinghamshire joined the UDM in the hope that by playing along with the capitalist state they would escape

the attacks. It was pits in South Nottinghamshire that were amongst the first to be axed. Those printworkers who did not come out in support of the Wapping workers soon also found that they had similar conditions imposed on them. Isolated from other sectors and other plants workers are easy meat for the capitalist state.

But workers in all sectors must recognise that an attack on one is an attack on all. The anger against the capitalists is there but the ability to act together and to find new forms of organisation has not yet been discovered. These will be essential if the next round of struggles are not to repeat the same pattern as those of the last five years. Above all workers must recognise that a fight for better living standards is not a question of just getting rid of the Tories but is about getting rid of the whole rotten system of wage labour. As capitalism is an international system it can only be destroyed by the international power of the working class. This won't come about tomorrow but has to be prepared for - not by building unions but by creating workplace organisations which can take the struggle beyond the immediate issues of wages and conditions. Above all, this requires a network of internationalist militants, linked to a communist party, to take the lead in struggle. It is to this long-term task that communists must dedicate themselves.



## THE ICC SPLIT IN SPAIN:

# THE ICC UP AGAINST IT'S OWN PERSPECTIVES

In April we received, via our comrades in Italy two documents announcing that the "Northern Nucleus" of the International Communist Current (ICC) in Spain had split from that organisation. We know nothing more of the splitters or of their subsequent political trajectory. From the documents it seems that they intend to abandon political activity. Much of what they write is about the fact that their criticisms of the ICC were ignored or not treated seriously. They further identify a general distrust amongst the members of the organisation which has led to resignations. Of these matters we have nothing to say as we lack the information. What is however of general interest is the nature of their criticisms of the ICC's perspectives and intervention.

The splitters accuse the ICC of "centrism" and "opportunism" in intervention citing such practices as issuing leaflets without putting the name of the organisation, intervening in struggles as workers and not as members of the ICC, and even in one leaflet (distributed by ICC members in Lyons) which called for the extension of the struggle actually appealing "for support for the union organisations" (Texte de rupture avec la OCI p.5). So much for their criticisms of intervention. They also reject the ICC's view of the "historic course". They agree with the ICC that we are "probably moving towards decisive confrontations which will have decisive results" but where the working class is going into battle with the bourgeoisie in "worse conditions (Party, consciousness, strength)" than ever and thus it will be defeated. They further add that the ICC has "always had great difficulty in analysing" the present historic situation and as a result has fallen into exaggeration and had to make great "oscillations" to justify its positions.

Let us first say that we don't share the positions of either the splitters or the ICC since both are the result of the way in which the ICC pose the problems facing revolutionaries today. What is however of general interest is that the splitters clearly highlight the contradiction implicit in the ICC's work today. This is essentially that they hold a perspective of a rising class struggle with an increasingly class conscious working class learning new lessons in the course of its struggle. Naturally in such a class struggle it is essential for communists to express themselves as part of the class and to participate wherever and whenever possible within those struggles to point out the line of march and to make the implicit political nature of those struggles explicit. But this is not exactly what the ICC are doing. What we have seen, as the splitters note, is a decrease in the political content of the ICC's interventions to the point where they "encourage apoliticism and councilism within the working class. In practice they have abandoned the fulfilment of the function for which the class gave birth to its organisations and political vanguards". (op cit p.7. The full text (which is in French) is available from Apartado 1598, 20080 San Sebastian, Espana).

This latter criticism is not one we share. It is necessary from time to time for revolutionary organisations to encourage the most basic tasks of solidarity and unification of struggles before it is possible to talk about the real political lessons or the next step forward. No organisation should be judged on the basis of one leaflet provided it doesn't conflict with the communist programme (obviously calling for aid to a union rather than the workers in struggle would be one such case). We, in fact think it is a sign of a growing maturity of the proletarian political camp that the discussion is moving on from whether or not there is such a thing as communist tactics to a debate about what those tactics are. What we find ironic and contradictory is that the ICC now appears to agree that such tactics are needed at a time when its perspectives say the class is becoming ever more conscious anyway. Why should it be necessary for communists to now resort to intervening as workers if the struggle is at a higher level than previously? The fact of the matter is that we are in a period of retreat of the class punctuated by heroic but isolated rearguard struggles in this or that country or this or that sector. The ICC's mode of intervention recognises this but its perspectives do not.

In fact it is difficult to hold a serious discussion with the ICC on the subject of intervention since they will blatantly contradict in public meetings what they say in their press. To take just one example - working in the unions. When we congratulated the ICC on recognising that working in the unions did not mean - joining the union structure but did (at times of struggle) open up the possibility of contacting more of the most class conscious workers they responded by saying that they had held this position since 1980 and referred us to WORLD REVOLUTION 25. And when we read it sure enough it does say that communist should work in union-initiated activities (the article was actually written to defend ICC participation in a union-led

demonstration in Paris which rather obscured the basically correct nature of the points it made). But the ICC doesn't say this in its INTERNATIONAL REVIEW 51. There on p.25 we find that the ICC only allows its militants to join a union where there is a closed shop "But this legal or quasi-legal obligation, similar to paying taxes, has nothing to do with CHOOSING to join a union in order to carry out anti-union activity". This piece of sophistry is in line with the general tone of the article but we don't intend to waste resources refuting it here. We leave it for our readers to judge whether joining the NUT as a teacher in this country is a quasi-legal obligation. Both CWO and ICC militants have joined this organisation in order to contact workers who are the most militant. Perhaps after the "years of truth" the 1990s will be the decade when the ICC starts telling the truth...

### INSTRUMENTAL THEORIES

This inability to face up to the present situation (which not only affects the ICC but all the tiny groups of councilists which exist in Britain today) has led the ICC to go in for what we called "instrumental theories" in the article "The ICC and the Historic Course - a Mistaken Method" (translated from BATTAGLIA COMUNISTA in COMMUNIST REVIEW 5 - one pound from the group address). The instrumental theories such as the "left in opposition", the "1980s are the years of truth" are basically constructed to hide a theoretical poverty and a distorted view of reality. Discussion with the ICC becomes increasingly difficult since these "theories" are open to so many varied interpretations that the unwary get dragged into a discussion on them without recognising that their whole premise is erroneous.

This premise is that understanding the "line of march" in history is the same thing as saying precisely what will happen in the next few years. Thus when the IBRP says that capitalism can no more obliterate its fundamental contradictions than someone can leap over their own shadow, when we say that the future will be one of increasing class conflict this is not enough for the ICC. They want to pose the childish question "will it be war or revolution?". This is childish because there is no answer to it. Marxist method lies in demonstrating the broad line of march not in what Marx called "speculation" about this or that detail. In fact, as the ICC are well aware, when he and Engels went in for rash predictions about the imminence of revolution they were invariably wrong. An even clearer abandonment of Marxist method for speculation can be seen in the shifting tactics of the Third International in the Twenties and Thirties which called the Social Democrats "fascists" one day and "workers parties" the next. For the IBRP the nature of capitalism makes further class confrontation inevitable but we do not speculate as to the outcome of a struggle which we cannot predict nor even all the circumstances under which it will take place. All we can do is to prepare for such a conflict in every possible way and to have clear perspectives about what we are doing at the present.

This is in direct contrast to the ICC which seeks to maintain at all costs the shibboleth that there have been three "waves of struggle" since May 68. Despite their denials in the July/August edition of World Revolution they see each of these "waves" as a step further in the growing political development of the working class. Anyone who points out that most of the practical (and therefore political) gains were made before 1974 (e.g. flying pickets, joint strike committees) which, with the possible exception of Poland, have not been surpassed since or who asks the question as to why the revolutionary minorities in the "years of truth" have shrunk in the capitalist metropolises and expanded only slowly in the periphery are dismissed as empiricists or pessimists. But the question is not about optimism or pessimism but about the method revolutionaries should adopt to analyse present capitalist reality in order to arrive at a clear perspective for our political work.

### A QUESTION OF METHOD

Here we would have thought that the ICC would have learnt something from its predecessors in the Communist Left of France which speculated in the late 1940s that since the proletariat has not overthrown capitalism a third world war was on the agenda. Their conclusion? There was nothing more to do but shut up shop and go to South America, abandoning the European working class to the nuclear holocaust to come. In contrast the Italian Left had concluded that since the work of political clarification was complete following the horrendous years of the counter-revolution then it was time to reconstitute the Fraction as a party in its own right. Though it was clear that with the reconstruction of capitalism after World War Two the bourgeoisie had established a new balance of domination over the class they did not consider that they could return to the mere theoretical work of the 1930s. As we said in COMMUNIST REVIEW 5 "a revolutionary rupture is always possible in the

imperialist epoch" (p.42) and armed with the clarity of the positions which all communist groups possess today they began their political work which they saw as a task of both theoretical development and practical intervention. Today our tendency maintains precisely the same perspective and precisely the same balance of work.

Today the ICC has forgotten the errors of its founders (who incidentally showed that they had learned nothing in 1974 when they tried to get revolutionaries in Europe to sign a leaflet which asserted that if the workers of Europe did not come to the aid of their Portuguese comrades then they would be guilty at conniving at a massacre) and therefore cannot learn from them. Today it is the same old story. The crisis is for them so developed (you could say overdeveloped if you went back to early ICC texts on the matter) and the historic options are already closing in fast> thus the ICC could accuse us recently of "being incapable of seeing how the proletariat stands as an obstacle to the war plans of the bourgeoisie" (INTERNATIONAL REVIEW 50) but this assumes that the crisis is such that the bourgeoisie's war plans have reached such a juncture. And this is where we part company with the ICC. For them "Today's struggles prepare tomorrow's revolution" (headline in WORLD REVOLUTION 116). We say that the class struggle has got a lot further to go before such a point is reached. If today's struggles are preparing for revolution tomorrow then the proletariat are lost for, as the ICC splitters in Spain noted there is not sufficient development of the means - the revolutionary Party, the class consciousness nor a recent history of class-wide experience to ensure that the confrontation will lead to a proletarian victory.

At our recent London meeting the ICC plaintively demanded to know where the consciousness for the future revolution was to come from if it was not from today's struggle. They correctly pointed out that the revolution of 1917 didn't just come out of thin air but was the product of the failed revolution of 1905 as well as the First World War and the struggles which led up to it. True but are the ICC suggesting that today's sectional struggles are in any way the equivalent of 1905 in Russia? Rather we would take the analogy a stage further back and point out that 1905 did not come from nowhere but was the product of an accumulation of struggles over the previous decade. In a sense this is a perfect illustration of the difference between us in our historical time-scale. We think we need many more 1905s or 1968s before the working class will be prepared for a revolutionary onslaught whilst the ICC sees such conditions being prepared today.

And this is what has led to the split with the comrades of the Northern Nucleus of the ICC. They could not sustain the ICC thesis that the class struggle was growing whilst they saw that the revolutionary organisation (which is a reflection of growing class consciousness) was not. As we wrote in COMMUNIST REVIEW 5.

"From this falsified view of reality these distorted interpretations, instrumental theories aimed at supporting the basic thesis ... it is more than easy for internal dissension, polemics and finally splits to emerge. There have already been examples of this and there will be further ones. But what is important, and what we wish to draw to the attention of the ICC comrades, is to relate this to the basic question of methodology. Only by abandoning this method and returning to the dialectical and materialist method can the splits from this organisation (if not the organisation as such in the face of such fragmentation) be useful to international communist movement towards the reconstruction of the political instrument of the class."

## ATTACK ON ULSTER WORKERS

continued from back page

On the eve of the privatisation announcement at H&W the workers voted to reject a union/management compromise on flexible working which would have marked a further deterioration of conditions in the yard. In that spirit they must take the lead in the present campaign and ensure that they defend themselves not only from the bosses but from the distractions and manoeuvrings of the unions, who have accepted the bosses logic of rationalisation. They must also counter the union tactic of dividing them from workers in other industries and localities who also have a vested interest in a united and militant fight against the bosses offensive.

For contact with the CWO in Ireland write as follows without mentioning the name: P.O. Box 117, Head Post Office, Tomb Street, Belfast BT1 1AA.



# WORKERS VOICE

BELFAST SHIPYARDS

## CLOSURES - THE BOSSES ULTIMATE DREAM

When the Anglo-Irish Agreement was first announced almost three years ago false analyses were thick on the ground from capitalists left-wing supporters. The various Stalinist and Trotskyite grouplets can be roughly divided into those who saw the Accords as an irrelevance and distraction, and those who warned of an attack on their beloved "allies" in the Republican movement. Only the CWO pointed out that the Agreement signalled a concerted attempt by the entire Western ruling class to pacify the situation in Ulster, and hence cut the massive military and financial drain of the "emergency" (presently costing the UK about £13m per week). Most importantly this would mean an economic as well as ideological attack on the working class. The forthcoming privatisations at Shorts, Harland and Wolf and NI Electricity are nothing but the economic pay-off of Thatchers strategy.

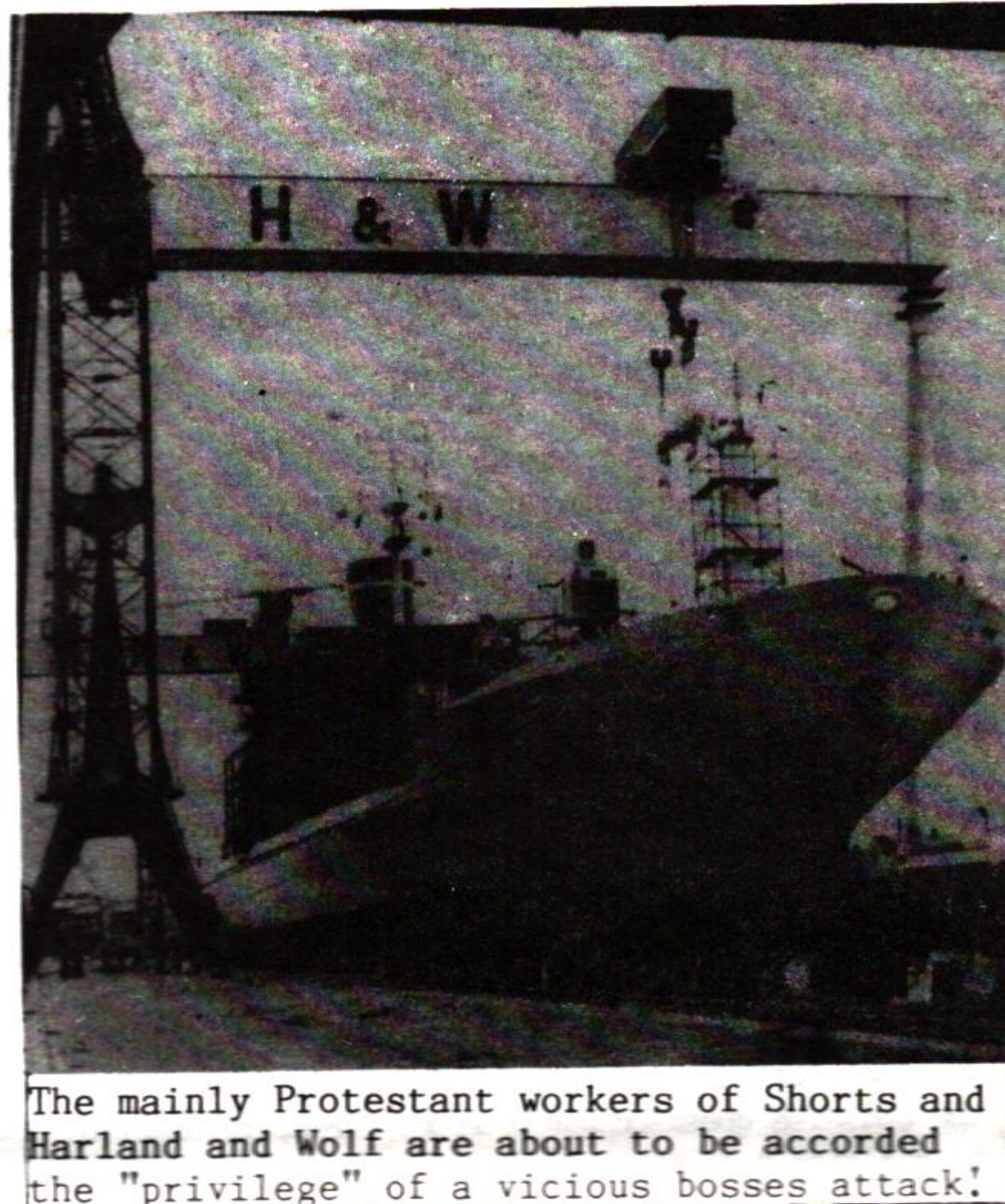
These events in turn have once again thrown the pseudo-socialist leftists into confusion. Still stuck with an archaic analysis of the North which sees the British imperialist ruling class in league with the Orange State and Protestant workers, they have found it difficult to respond to the spectacle of Britain obviously preparing to put the boot in. After years of trying to be greener than Sinn Fein by pouring their contempt on the "reactionary Protestant dupes" in these three firms the left now attempts to pose as their defenders in the fight against austerity. After decades stressing the significance of Protestant "privileges" the sundry Trotskyists have lost grip of reality and find themselves capable only of defining the working class as a series of categories in the manner of bourgeois sociology. The result is that the workers are blamed for the divisions created by their exploiters.

### THE REALITY OF AUSTERITY

Away from the fantasy world of capitalist ideology both right and left is the reality of the most serious outright attack on the working class of Northern Ireland since the beginning of the world crisis almost twenty years ago. This in a region which already has the lowest living standards in the UK and the highest unemployment in Europe.

The two relative giants of Belfast industry, Harland and Wolf shipbuilders and Shorts aero-

space, were supposedly untouchable because any downturn in their fortunes would have such serious social and political ramifications - and in Ulster this could mean civil unrest.



The mainly Protestant workers of Shorts and Harland and Wolf are about to be accorded the "privilege" of a vicious bosses attack!

The alternative was literally seen as investing in industry to save on the military budget. Shorts had already been nationalised in 1943 and in 1975 H&W was taken over. Since, the proportion of British government industrial subsidies to these two firms has grown to as much as a third of the total in an already heavily subsidised economy.

Along with this support has come the organisation of a vicious programme of rationalisation in both companies, with the shipyard in particular being reduced to a shadow of its former status through a massive round of redundancies, coupled with the increased exploitation of the remaining workers by new working practices, productivity agreements, technology etc. Despite a significant improvement in their fiscal positions as a result both firms remain chronic loss makers for such relatively small enterprises (latest annual figures; H&W £17.3m, Shorts, including interest payments, c.£45m).

The British government, after its vain attempt to get the workers to pay for the mess, has now decided that it no longer wants to foot the bill and among much ballyhoo has extended its policy of no support for "lame ducks" across the Irish Sea. For good measure the privatisation of Northern Ireland Electricity has been included in the present wave, for although profitable (largely due to low oil prices), it too will require extensive restructuring and job cuts in the near future as its smaller plants close. Altogether the three privatisations will be a concerted assault on tens of thousands of workers throughout the British Isles (ie: the effects on suppliers in both Eire and Great Britain, not to mention the mirror image proposals for yards in British Shipbuilders) - not even the Tories have been idiotic enough to portray events as coincidental.

The supposed spark to the entire government campaign was the request by H&W for funding to build the super-liner "Ultimate Dream" for Ravi Tikkoo, who demanded huge subsidies. It was an ominous sign when the Cabinet responded "The Harland application for money falls into the joke category". What are not likely to be so amusing are the implication of such a massive and sudden withdrawal of support on the workers in the firing line.

With so many variables and different possible scenarios it is of course impossible to make an accurate assessment of the effects of privatisation. However with the H&W management already actively seeking 1000 redundancies (25%) as part of the package it is clear that the bosses are going for the jugular. Speculation is rife that neither the shipyard or Shorts aircraft division (3500 workers) will survive private ownership, and it is not impossible to imagine that all three sections of the company and their suppliers could also close. In all this could mean 30000 job losses in successive years, or a third of the manufacturing jobs in Northern Ireland.

### FIGHTING BACK

Of course one of the variables affecting the whole programme of rationalisation and closures is the response of the workers, and the need of the state to maintain the social peace. Needless to say that as socialists this is the aspect of the whole affair which concerns us most. We must point the way towards an effective struggle against these attacks, at the same time exposing and denouncing paths of activity which are impotent and/or reactionary dead-ends.

Into the latter category undoubtedly falls the united union campaign against all three privatisations, which (for workers with short memories) is led by the self-same unions who have been happily negotiating lay-offs for the past decade without a whisper of resistance. Into this campaign the union bureaucrats have attempted to bring a motley crew of local politicians, community groups and church leaders, many of whom don't even oppose the governments proposals! This is the sort of public opinion exercise which has a losing pedigree against capitalist states and multi-national companies the world over.

However if it was simply a matter of poor leadership in the campaign we could limit ourselves to calls for militants or the rank and file to be put in charge. Unfortunately the whole movement accepts the logic of the companies being rationalised in order to be assets to the nation, to British capitalism. The thrust of the argument over Shorts for example is that the company should be kept together to continue its innovative role in research and development, particularly by cross-fertilizing ideas from the aircraft and missile divisions. One searches the campaign literature in vain for a firm position that the unions will fight further redundancies and speed-ups.

The "militants" of the movement perform an equally pernicious derailment job when they focus on public ownership as something the workers should defend in itself. This is again claimed to be in the best interests of the industry, although the left-wing elements also see nationalisation as a stepping stone to "socialism".

To refute this argument we need look no further than the experience of the workers in Shorts, Harlands and NIE themselves. They know first hand that nationalisation does not stop a particular enterprise being a capitalist unit. Indeed, nationalisation is in every case a prelude to the reorganisation of a specific industry on more "rational" lines; with all this implies for increased exploitation and "uneconomic" sections. It is an attack on the workers as much as privatisation is.

The real issue is not ownership, which the union campaign has centred on, but the resistance to the assaults on the workers, whether these take place in state corporations, or in "privatised" industries.

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## C.W.O.

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